...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Question No. 448.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN:*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing is going on record....(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... None of that is going on record. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Please resume your places. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN:*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Please resume you places. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Hon. Members, kindly resume you places. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Nothing has gone on record, that is it. ...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)... Nothing has gone on record.

...(*Interruptions*)...(*Interruptions*)...

*445. [The questioner(s) (Shri Ram Jethmalani and Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi) were absent. For answer *vide* page 21.]

*446. [The questioner (Shri Kanjibhai Patel) was absent. For answer *vide* page 22.]

*447. [The questioner (Dr. K. Malaisamy) was absent. For answer *vide* page 23.]

Access Deficit Charges earned by BSNL

*448. SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the qauntum of Access Deficit Charges earned by BSNL during the years 2001-02 to 2007-08, year-wise; and

(b) whether it is a fact that the access deficit charges, so earned were being used by BSNL for providing and maintaining telephonic services to rural and remote areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The Access Deficit Charges (ADC) regime came into existence with effect from 1st May, 2003. The quantum of ADC earned by BSNL after its provisioning by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is given below:

Period		Amount
From	To	(Rs. in crores)
01.05.2003	31.01.2004	7851
01.02.2004	31.01.2005	4559
01.02.2005	28.02.2006	4584
01.03.2006	31.03.2007	2760
01.04.2007	31.03.2008	1900

* Not recorded.

(b) The Access Deficit Charge has been provided by TRAI to basic service operators including BSNL for compensating the access deficits incurred by them for the provision of basic services in rural, semi-urban and urban areas at affordable tariff which are below the cost based tariff. Accordingly, ADC so earned by BSNL was utilized for providing and maintaining its basic services at affordable rates in urban, semi-urban, rural and remote areas.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, while initially recording my strong opposition to the decision of the Government and the TRAI to phase out the Access Deficit Charges regime, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what concrete steps are being taken by the Government to compel the private operators to go for rural telephony network in view of their being the biggest beneficiaries of phasing out of the Access Deficit Charges. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I did not club it. ...(*Interruptions*)... I didn't club it. ...(*Interruptions*)... Please go ahead. ...(*Interruptions*)... Please go ahead with the answer. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, with the recommendation of the TRAI, whether the hon. Member is accepting it or not, the intention of the Government is that because when we are accommodating the recommendation made by the TRAI, any loss which is going to be incurred to any specific operator, including the PSUs owned by the Government, the compensation must be done in other ways. As already said, it is a commitment made by the Government, of course, the recommendation also says that whatever loss is going to be incurred by BSNL it is to be compensated through other routes, namely, the USO Fund. Apart form that, phasing out the ADC is well within the domain of the recommendatory body. Any negative impact, which is being foreseen by the hon. Member by phasing out of the ADC, all the points in this regard are being well taken. If the hon. Member has any suggestion or whatever he has already put on record, the Government has an open mind on it. We are going to form a separate Committee and all the deficits can be discussed in this Committee. If it is necessary that any rule has to be amended, it will be amended.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, my specific question has not been answered. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, I am putting my second supplementary but my earlier question has not been answered. I am not asking about how to make good the losses. I asked what specific action the Government is envisaging to compel or force the private operators to go for rural telephony, which they are not doing. After that I will put my second question.

SHRI A. RAJA: About earlier question I admitted that there is no mandatory provision available either with the Ministry or there is a recommendation made by the TRAI that the operators should go to the rural areas. Impliedly through other routes, we are pushing it to go for the rural areas and that is why we are giving subsidy under the USO Fund. Of course, about 11000 towers for phase-II and 8000 towers for phase-I have been planned across the country. As soon as these 19000 towers, which are going to be borne by the USO Fund, are set up, then the rural density will come up.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: My second supplementary is whether the Government is considering to propose a mandatory provision for all the operators to work in the rural telephony area.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, that has to be decided by the TRAI. After consultations, as I have already promised, I propose to form a Committee. If necessary that Committee will decide.

A reference can be sent to the TRAI to give certain recommendations in this regard. Accordingly, we will proceed.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, it was mentioned in the reply that from 1.5.2003 to 31.1.2004, the Access Deficit Charges stood at Rs. 7851 crores. So, I would like to know as to how it came down so substantially to Rs. 1,900 crores in 2007-08. What are the reasons behind this? This is number one.

Secondly, the hon. Minister has also mentioned that ADC earned by the BSNL will be utilized for providing and maintaining the basic service at affordable rates in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. So, I would like to know, specifically, as to how much amount are they going to spend on rural areas.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, the USO fund collected as on 1.4.2008 is around Rs. 20,00,000 crores. The amount that has been spend is, of course, very low. It is only Rs. 6371.435 crores. The remaining amount is lying with the USO Statutory Fund. I must say before the House that this Fund is non-lapsable. It is being derived from the Consolidated Fund of India. Simply because this year this fund is not spend does not mean that this amount wil go to the Finance Ministry or any other head. The amount is lying with us. That is why we proposed to put up 18,000 towers at a stretch within a couple of years. All these funds will be utilised for the purpose. For the first time we have taken another decision. Since the broadband connectivity in this country, that too in remote areas are very low, for the first time we decided that this unspent money can be utilised for broadband connectivity in rural areas also.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, as far as the mobile services are concerned, BSNL is not providing mobile services to the international border areas. Whereas, Sir, there are some private companies who are providing mobile services up to the end point of the border areas. There is a double standard. Why is BSNL not going to extreme border areas? Others are going. People are suffering. People are inclined towards BSNL services.

SHRI A. RAJA: With due respect to the hon. Member, there is a misconception in the question. The Home Ministry for security reasons in the border areas announced that this is a buffer area; there should not be any mobile operation. Of course, I have come across this. Even in the meeting of the NDC, some of the Chief Ministers in the Northern States in the presence of the Prime Minister submitted that BSNL is not working, Indian telephones are not working, wherein the other countries' mobile services are working in the border areas. It is our stand that has been taken by the Home Ministry that buffer zones should not be used for mobile services. Wherein, foreign country's signals are coming. This matter is being taken up with the Home Ministry as to how we can abvoid this multiplicity of signals for the security of this country. So, there is no question of private operators being permitted and BSNL is not permitted.

Missing ship carrying Indian Crew

*449. SHRI AMAR SINGH:††
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

†† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by (Shri Amar Singh).